

Girl Scouts/San Diego-Imperial Council is the council that serves girls in my district, and I am proud of their work and leading expertise on the challenging issues affecting girls in today's world. This council serves over 30,000 girls in San Diego and Imperial Counties.

During their time in Washington, the representatives of Girl Scouts were discussing a very important issue: safety for girls. I am impressed by their dedication to helping all girls feel emotionally and physically safe, secure and strong. In our contemporary society where child abductions, rampant abuse and other violence against children occurs too frequently, their task is extremely important. I commend the Girl Scouts for their national and local leadership on this issue.

Through a nationwide call to action, Girl Scouts of the USA is leading an effort to create communities in which all girls feel safe and empowered. I ask that schools, churches, youth-serving organizations, Congress, and other government entities join with Girl Scouts to bring attention to this very important issue. All of our nation's children deserve to feel safe, secure and strong.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I congratulate Girl Scouts for a job well done and look forward to working with them on ensuring the safety of our nation's youth.

#### H. RES. 598 RECOGNIZES THE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MILITARY IMPACTED SCHOOLS

**HON. SILVESTRE REYES**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 4, 2004*

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res 598, sponsored by my colleague Mr. HAYES of North Carolina. The resolution recognizes the valuable contributions of military impacted schools, teachers, administration, and staff for their ongoing contributions to the education of military children.

The federal Impact Aid program has been assisting school districts since its inception in 1950. The Impact Aid program provides financial assistance to school districts that are limited in their ability to raise local revenue by the presence of tax-exempt federal property, and must educate larger numbers of children because of the presence of federal employees. The program provides formula grants to cover a portion of per pupil education costs, as well as grants to support construction and maintenance needs.

This program has been a life-line for many school districts like the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), which I represent, whose annual budget includes a significant amount of federal Impact Aid funds.

Fort Bliss, Texas, also located within my district, is home to the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center as well as the Army's Sergeant Major's Academy. Fort Bliss is also a major employer in my district. The children of troops and civil servants at Fort Bliss attend EPISD schools.

I ask my colleagues to support our troops, their families and this resolution. I would also urge my colleagues to support H.R. 932, a bill sponsored by my colleagues Mr. KIRK and Mr. LARSON. This bill would make Impact Aid an entitlement for our local education agencies. This is a fair, just and more efficient way to fund our federally impacted schools.

#### COMMEMORATING 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF CENTRO ROMERO

**HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 4, 2004*

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Centro Romero, a community-based organization that has been serving Salvadoran immigrants in the Chicago communities of Rogers Park, Edgewater, Ravenswood, and Uptown. Since its founding in 1984, Centro Romero has served Latino immigrant and refugee populations by providing services to adults and children to help them overcome barriers of integrating into U.S. society. Last year, Centro Romero served over 5,600 clients through its adult education, women's empowerment, youth learning and leadership and legal assistance programs.

Centro Romero was founded by a group of Salvadoran refugees living in Chicago who wanted to assist other incoming Central American refugees arriving in the United States to seek safe haven from the political and civil repression and human rights abuses that were plaguing the region during the 1970s and 1980s. Centro Romero is named in honor of Archbishop Oscar Romero, a Salvadoran Roman Catholic cleric, on behalf of his service of the poor and oppressed people. Archbishop Romero was assassinated in 1980 for his outspoken denunciations of the ruling elite and his defense of human and civil rights during El Salvador's civil war.

Centro Romero began its work in Chicago communities by providing basic services such as food, job placement, housing orientation and immigration procedures. Today, Centro Romero provides these services and has added a women's program and youth program to address additional needs in the growing Latino community.

Today, in the House of Representatives, I would like to extend my congratulations and

appreciation from the grateful communities of Chicago to the dedicated staff and volunteers of Centro Romero for their many contributions providing vital information and essential services for the Latino communities. All of us who live in the Chicago area are fortunate to have Centro Romero in our midst and we all benefit from its unparalleled commitment to improving our community.

#### JOIN ME IN IMPROVING INSURANCE FOR DISABLED VETERANS

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 4, 2004*

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to urge support for improvements for veterans who have become disabled in their service to our country. I have introduced H.R. 4229, the "Fair Insurance for Disabled Veterans Act" to address this need.

First, when the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance, SDVI, began in 1951, it was intended to provide service-disabled veterans with the ability to purchase life insurance coverage at "standard" rates.

Unfortunately, these life insurance premiums are based upon mortality rates for 1940, while current standard life insurance policies have premiums based upon the 2001 mortality table. This means that service-disabled veterans are being charged premiums based on a table that is 60 years out of date. The Independent Budget, prepared and endorsed by many veterans service organizations, has recommended that the mortality table be updated so that service-disabled veterans pay lower premiums for insurance. My bill would provide insurance comparable to standard policies, based on 2001 tables.

Second, the VA provides mortgage life insurance, VMLI, up to \$90,000 to severely service-disabled veterans who qualify for specially adapted housing grants. Currently, this amount covers only about 72 percent of the outstanding mortgage balances because the maximum amount has not been increased since 1992. We know how the cost of houses has skyrocketed since then in many areas of our country! In May, 2001, an evaluation by the Department of Veterans Affairs recommended that the coverage be increased to between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The Independent Budget has also recommended that the coverage be increased. H.R. 4229 implements those recommendations by increasing the maximum to \$200,000 to cover 98 percent of mortgage benefits outstanding.

I invite my colleagues to support H.R. 4229 to improve insurance policies for our Nation's service-connected disabled veterans.